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ABSTRACT

Recent studies in communication theory are outlined and briefly discussed. Categories of research included are information systems, interpersonal communication, mass communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication, political communication, instructional communication, and health communication. Except for the area of health communication, all of these areas seem to be expanding. A trend was found toward attempts to build meaningful theories of communication, rather than borrowing theories from other disciplines. (AA)

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NEW RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION THEORY:

A SUMMARY

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OVERVIEW: TRENDS IN COMMUNICATION THEORY RESEARCH

Purpose

The purpose of this examination is to identify trends and new ideas that are current within the field of communication theory.

Scope

The field of communication theory is broad and therefore the samplings of research that are presented in the following pages are grouped according to the eight classifications used by the International Communication Association. These include: (1) information systems; (2) interpersonal communication; (3) mass communication; (4) organizational communication; (5) intercultural communication; (6) political communication; (7) instructional communication; and (8) health communication.

Procedure

Samples are provided in each of the eight divisions of communication previously identified. These are largely derived from recent ICA programs. Human Communication Research is a relatively new journal in the field focusing on scholarly research. Because of their limited numbers, contents of all of these publications are identified. The Journal of Communication, in its twenty-sixth year of publication has in recent years attempted to popularize some of the more theoretical materials being researched in the field. Annotations are provided for the summer 1976 issue to suggest types of studies, approaches, and results. Publications are listed for the past year as a further sampling of research being published. Finally, textbooks known to the author and either directly or indirectly related to

communication theory which were published in 1975 or 1976 are identified to suggest trends, if any, in classroom materials.

Conclusions

With perhaps some restrictions in the area of health communication, all of the other seven areas seem to be expanding prolifically in numbers of convention programs and published research. Interpersonal, orgarization, instructional, and to some extent intercultural communication, seem to be providing materials most pertinent to the field of speech communication.

Of particular significance, I think, is the trend in attempts to build meaningful theories of communication. No longer does satisfaction seem to exist in taking from sociology and psychology prevalent theories and applying them to the speech communication arena. Instead, we find information processing systems (e.g. in humor) and attempts to build the communication audit into an organizational theory, as well as efforts to create and/or re-examine meaningfully critical, empirical, classical, coorientational, and interaction theories and to establish broad and reliable methodologies for use in the field.

More specifically, frequently recurring research (which contributes the meaningful bits which lead to theories) includes such areas as nonverbal communication, impact of television on various audiences, especially children and voters as well as studies in specific communication contexts such as prisons, hospitals, corporations, voluntary organizations, etc. Other topics include values, attitudes, language development, learning and persuasion, self-concept, self-disclosure, risk-taking, trust, credibility, small group interaction, conflict resolution, and communication competencies.

Textbooks seem to maintain a fairly recent but general trend that shows strong focus on interpersonal communication, viewing public speaking in the broader context of the communication process as a whole, and that shows strong emphasis on communication games for the classroom as alternatives to traditional lecture methods.

Selected Representative Research Topics

DIVISION I. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

1. Coping with Information Overload Conditions in Decision-making
2. Information Processing through Social Choice Mechanisms: the Limitations of Direct Democracy
3. A General Systems Theory Approach to Information Acquisition
4. The Functions of Communication in Aging
5. Problems in the Economics of Information
6. A Workshop in Path Analysis
7. A Workshop in Markov-Chain Analysis
8. Theory Construction in Speech Communication
9. A Theoretical Assessment of Self-Involvement Attitudes as Constraints on Human Information Processing
10. Problems in the Economics of Information
11. Models of Cognition, Models of Messages, and Theories of Communication Effects: Spacial and Network Paradigms

DIVISION II. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

1. An Exploratory Study of Consumer Role Perceptions in Adolescent Consumer Socialization
2. Verbal and Nonverbal Communication of Sexuality
3. Personality Correlates of Spoken Message Comprehension
4. Ingratiation in the Interview Situation
5. Audience Feedback and Perceived Persuasiveness as Determinants of Attitude Change Following Counterattitudinal Advocacy
6. Interpersonal Communication of Trust and the Tolerance of Pain: Testing a Patient Physician Relationship Model at an Outpatient Clinic
7. Deception: Dimensions of Judgment
8. Responsiveness to Facial and Verbal Cues
9. Subject Attitudes toward Researchers
10. Personal Consequences of a Small Group Decision and Choice Shift
11. Toward a Process Model of Social Interaction
12. A Re-examination of the Predictive Power of the Congruity Model: A Multiple Regression Approach
13. An Information Processing Model for Conflict Resolution
14. Self-Disclosure and Trust: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Inter-relationships
15. The Measurement of Verbal Predispositions: Scale Development and Application
16. Expletive Deleted: A Study of Language Usage
17. Communication and Coorientational Accuracy in Dyads
18. Strategies to Elicit Self-disclosure in Mixed-sex Dyads
19. Some Determinants of Communication Network Characteristics Among Close Friends

DIVISION III. MASS COMMUNICATION

1. Ethics Research
2. Experimental Effects of Television Advertising on Children
3. Personal Consequences: Mass Media Transfer of Scientific Information
4. Children's Occupational Sex-Role Stereotypes: the Linkage Between TV Content and Perception
5. TV Heroes as Behavior Models: A Methodology for the Study and Comparison of Value Profiles
6. Emotionally Disturbed Children's Perceptions of TV Characters As Models of Anti-social Behavior
7. A Research Model for Examining Consumer Socialization from a Cognitive Development Perspective
8. Rape and Social Class Differences in Perceived Reality of Socially Relevant Television Programs for Adults in Atlanta and Chicago.
9. Social System Effects in the Diffusion of School Bond Proposals
10. Ideology, Attitude, and the Influence of Public Opinion Polls

DIVISION IV. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

1. The Communication Audit
2. Changing Supervisory Communication Behavior through Transactional Analysis
3. Formation of Group Aspiration Levels: An Empirical Comparison of Predictors
4. Information Overload in the Organization: A Relational Approach
5. Occupational Desirability and Choice As a Function of Communication Apprehension
6. Using A Systems Approach to Urban Development: An Information Feedback Model
7. Communication Rules in Complex Organizations: A Case Study of CBS News
8. Role and Function of a Metropolitan Medical Center as Perceived within its Proximate Environment
9. A Computer Based Consumer-Organization Inquiry and Response System
10. Weight Watchers International: A Study of Organizational Motivation
11. The Communication Audit in Theory Construction
12. Subordinate Satisfaction as a Function of Perceived Supervisor Credibility.

DIVISION V. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

1. The Role of Non-verbal Behaviors in Interracial Encounters
2. A Cross-cultural Comparison of Viewer Agreement with Opinionated Television Characters
3. Communication Problems of Change Agents: The Peace Corps
4. Satellite Communication as Change Agents in Third World Countries

5. Communication and Urbanization in Latin America
6. Cultural Differences in Kinesics
7. The Impact of Frontier Media on Minority Cultures
8. Bilingualism and Cognition
9. A Methodological Study of Compound and Co-ordinate Bilingualism
10. An Experimental Attempt to Validate the Notion of Linguistic Relativity through Free Recall

DIVISION VI. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

1. The Agenda Setting Function of Political Messages
2. The Role of Television in the Political Socialization of Children
3. Family Socialization and Adolescent Radicalism
4. The Effect of Name Identification on Voter Preference in a State Legislative Primary
5. Party Workers Assessment of the Impact of Watergate
6. Women in Politics: Images and Voter Support
7. Two Decades of Political Campaign Commercials: An Evolutionary Perspective
8. "Political" and "Legal" Communication
9. Effects of Inadmissable Testimony on Information Processing and Decision Making in Jury Trials

DIVISION VII. INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION

1. Communication Styles as a Predictor of Academic Success in the Basic Speech Communication Course
2. Listening Skills Training: Application of Crisis Intervention Programs
3. Implementing Mastery Learning in a High School Speech Classroom
4. A Survey of the Use of Communication Games in Speech Communication
5. A Review and Critical Analysis of the Literature Pertaining to Diffusion of Innovations in Education
6. Factors Affecting Learning in an Interpersonal Communication Course: An Evaluative Study
7. An Exploratory Investigation of the Effects of Communication Apprehension in Alternative Systems of Instruction
8. Identification of Communication Competencies Required by Future Businesspersons
9. Information Processing in the Urban Future: A Technological Perspective

DIVISION VIII. HEALTH COMMUNICATION

1. Communicating about Health to Sick People
2. Some Problems in the Co-ordinated Management of Meaning in Health Communication
3. Dialogue as a Mode of Health Communication in a Correctional Facility

Part I: Recent Publications in Communication Theory

Human Communication Research, Fall 1974, Vol. 1, no. 1

"Affection and Reciprocity," by Pearce, Wright, Sharp and Slama

"Deception as a Communication Construct," by Knapp, Hart & Dennis

"The Mediation of Resistance to Persuasion Strategies," by Burgoon and King

"The Effect of Interaction Behavior on Source Credibility, Homophily and Interpersonal Attraction," by McCroskey, Hamilton and Weiner

"Cognitive Tuning," by Powell

"Role-taking and Role-Playing," by Kelley, Osborne & Hendrick

"Figurative Language and Source Credibility," by Reinsch

Book Review Essay: "Communication and Conflict," by Steinfatt

Human Communication Research, Spring 1975, Vol. 1, no. 3

"Phases of Conflict in Small Group Development," by Ellis & Fisher

"Coalition and Communication," by Buchli and Pearce

"Analysis of Relational Communication in Dyads," by Rogers & Farace

"Three Empirical Investigations of Language Intensity," by Burgoon, Jones and Stewart

"Actions Speak Louder Than Words--Sometimes," by Roberts & Leifer

"Equivocation: Character Insurance," by Williams & Goss

Book Review Essay: "Finite Stochastic Modeling of Communication Processes," by Hewes

Human Communication Research, Summer 1975, Vol. 1, no. 4

"Verbal Organization and Learning," by Whitman & Timmis

"Interaction in Encounter Groups," by Mabry

"Interaction Theory and Measurement," by Lashbrook

"Communication of Self-Disclosure," by Gilbert & Horenstein

"Measuring Perceived Homophily in Interpersonal Communication," by McCroskey, Richmon, and Daly

"Accumulated Information and Attitude Change," by Saltiel & Woelfel

"Elements in a School District's Collective Innovation-Decision," by Wall and McCain

"Sensitivities to Phonological Markedness and Transitional Probability," by Motley and Baars

Book Review Essay: "An Introduction to the Literature of Causal Modeling," by Joseph N. Cappella

Human Communication Research, Winter 1975, Vol. 1, no. 2

"Toward a Developmental Theory of Interpersonal Communication," by Berger and Calabrese

"Dominance Tendencies and Interruption Behavior," by Rogers & Jones

"Low- and High-Inference Judgments of Communicative Behavior," by Bradac & Bell

"Predictors of Learning and Persuasion," by Burgoon

"The Relationship of Evidence to Belief Systems and Attitude Change," by Florence

"Interpersonal Communication Following the Wallace Shooting," by Fink & Noell

"Sequential Structure in Human Social Communication," by Stech

"Self-Interest, Credibility, and Message Selection in Organizational Communication," by Walton

Book Review Essay: "Handbook of Communication: The Parts and The Whole," by Seibold, Westley, & Frandsen

Human Communication Research, Fall 1975, Vol. 2, no. 1

"Attitude-Verbal Report-Overt Behavior," by Seibold

"Proactive and Retroactive Attribution Processes," by Berger

"Communication Apprehension and Interpersonal Attraction," by McCroskey, Daly, Richmon, and Cox

"Task-Oriented Small Groups," by Mabry

"Mass Media and Voters," by Cohen

"Competing Aural Message Situations," by Halley

Book Review Essay: "Literature on Classical Theory Construction," by McDermott

Human Communication Research, Winter 1976, Vol. 2, no. 2

"Personal Space Expectations," by Burgoon & Jones

"Nonverbal Behavior and Social Penetration," by Keiser & Altman

"Nonverbal Receiving Ability," by Buck

"Answering Questions Indirectly," by Nofsinger

"The Metaphorical Dimension in Descriptive Language," by Jordan and McLaughlin

"Rule Acquisition and Transfer," by Wheeler Ellsworth

"Validity of Human Subject Experiments," by Rossiter

Book Review Essay: "Multivariate Analysis in Communication Research," by Monge & Day

Human Communication Research, Spring 1976, Vol. 2, no. 3

"Campaign Communication and Attitude Change," by Barnett, Serota, and Taylor

"River Ridge III: The Campaign that Failed," by McCain & Wall

"Teleconferencing," by Ryan

"Negotiation Behavior," by Turnbull, Strickland, and Shaver

"Helping Requests and Voluntarism," by Tims, Swart, and Kidd

"Information Transmission Factors," by Saine

"Apprehension and Communication Effectiveness," by Freimuth

Book Review Essay: "Structural-Functionalism," by Fontes & Guardalabene

Part II: Recent Publications - Annotated

Journal of Communication, Summer 1976, Vol. 26, no. 3

A. Nonverbal Communication

1. "Movements with Precise Meanings," by Ekman

   In this study a set of codes or "emblems" is considered. Emblems such as "OK" and "NO" are studied cross-culturally. Many instances of identical emblems exist between the U.S. and other literate cultures. In contrast is the emblem for "suicide" which in a portion of New Guina is hand to throat (hanging), in U.S. is index finger to ear (gun) and in Japan is fist to abdomen (use of sword or knife).

2. "Body Accessibility Revisited," by Rosenfled, Kartus and Ray

   This replication of an earlier study suggests shifts in the touch behavior of opposite-sex friends. Most of this research focuses on who touches whom, where, and how often. Very little change was noted in body accessibility for mothers, fathers, and same-sex friends of unmarried males and females, aged 18-22.

3. "Experimenter Expectancy Effects," by Finkelstein

   This study reviews possible effects and interactions that are affected by experimenter expectancies. Particular attention is paid to nonverbal cues and interpersonal influence.

4. "Prison Codes," by Ramsey

   Within the prison setting of tightly controlled verbal communication, patters of dress, play, posture, and gesture identify subcultures and are vital channels of inmate communication. An inmate's personal space and critical distance vary depending on the area in which he is at a given time. Contrasts of cultural norms are illustrated by touching behavior, visiting room behavior, and manipulation of time.

5. "Proxemics and Tacility in Latin America," by Shuter

This study of interpersonal interaction in three areas - Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia disproves the popular premise that Latin Americans, regardless of sex and nationality, have similar distance and contact orientations. Instead, results from a multivariate analysis of variance indicate that as one travels from Central to South America, interactants stand farther apart and the frequencies of contact, especially touching and holding, diminish.

B. General

1. "Executive Reports to Congress," by Johannes

This study reviews statutory requirements affecting reports by the Executive Branch of government to the Legislature. An increasingly common requirement (compare some 200 reports in 1939 to some 960 in 1971), required reports seem successful as a means to encourage Executive-Legislative communication.

2. "Rating the Movies," by Valenti

A six year survey of the motion picture industry's movie rating system suggests that public awareness of the system is increasing and that "families with children" find the system most useful.

3. "Gossip and Occupational Ideology," by Rysman

Spreading of dubious stories affects work situations, images of moral superiority, the worth of role partners, domain assumptions, and other basic concepts. A common characteristic is the implausibility of content.

4. "Global TV Flow: Another Look," by Read

The figures describing the incredible flow of American television programs around the world show more than 2/3 of the foreign income derives from Britain, Canada, Japan, Australia, West Germany, France, and Brazil. Exports between 100,000 and 200,000 TV hours annually grossed approximately $100 million in 1975.

C. Creativity in Children

1. "Can TV Stimulate Imaginative Play?" by Singer and Singer

This study examined the effectiveness of adult intervention in enhancing imaginative play among sixty three and four year old children. Results suggested that the children were most susceptible to the influence of an adult providing direct, immediate feedback for their own responses but that a program like Mister Rogers' Neighborhood could increase imaginative play if viewed by small groups of children accompanied by an adult.

2. "Does the Medium Matter?" by Meline

   Watching, reading, and hearing messages are viewed as types of stimuli prompting children to be creative. Children exposed to audiotape and print presentations (which could only name or describe objects, people, etc.) gave consistently more stimulus-free and transformational ideas than did children exposed to concrete, video presentations which showed objects, people, actions, etc.

D. Historical Perspective

1. "The Rise and Problems of Media Research in German," by Hardt

   A discussion of alternative mass communication philosophies in Germany. Historical, empirical, and critical theories specifically are reviewed as areas of scientific inquiry within the field of social science research.

2. "Towards a Sociology of the Press," by Weber

   This article is taken from a speech delivered at the first Congress of Sociologists in Frankfurt in 1910 which among other topics examines the "institutional" character of the press in Germany and considers the fate of journalism as a profession.

E. Humor

1. "Theoretical Notes on Humor," by Goldstein

   A discussion of the role of cognitive balance in explaining attitudinal components in humor which suggests that in self-deprecating jokes (or in laughing at one's own ethnic group) significant shifts appear in the traditional balance formulation.

2. "Anatomy of the Joke," by Berger

   In clarifying how a humorist works, six theories of humor are identified and specific techniques of humor are classified in these four categories: Language, Logic, Identity, and Action.

3. "Does Ethnic Humor Serve Prejudice?" by Fave and Mannell

   This discussion of issues regarding social psychological functions of ethnic group humor stresses complexity and incompleteness and suggests at least some humanitarian functions in humor.

4. "The Social Contexts of Humor," by Winick

   Through examination of contexts of humor for 2,175 jokes reported during 1970-75, the premise is supported that orally communicated jokes reflect trends in American life and help bring significant problems (e.g. role, conflict, and power problems) down to manageable size.

5. "Joking at Work," by Ullian

   The focus of this study is on bantering in social situations in which one of the participants is the target of the joke. Focus is particularly on new information as a condition capable of eliciting joking sequences.

6. "Obscene Joking Across Cultures," by Fine

   This study suggests that obscene joking serves to socialize members into group norms and maintain the norms. Vilation of the norms may produce direct hostile confrontation.

7. "Is Sexual Humor Sexist?" by Chapman and Gadfield

   Appreciation of sexual humor is linked to sex-role concepts and personality variables. Part of the study concerns contrasting male and female funniness ratings for thematically distinct cartoons. Statistically significant correlations emerged between cartoon funniness ratings and subjects' ages, self-rated attractiveness, degree of conservatism, etc.

8. "Putdown Humor," by Zillman and Stocking

   Although disparagement in humor abounds, its appreciation depends on who is disparaging whom. Acculturation as a variable in preferred types of humor is considered and qualified generalizations are presented.

9. "What is Funny to Whom? The Role of Gender," by Cantor

   Replication by the author of a 1970 study finds it is still funnier to both males and females to see a woman, rather than a man, as the butt of a joke. The sex of the victim rather than the sex of the dominator determines the effect.

10. "The Feminine Routine," by Levine

    Using recordings of popular comedy material by both men and women, the study explores the differences in routines of each and concludes that the stand-up comedienne shows a difference from the male comic: the object of derision is herself.

11. "Sex Differences in Children's Humor," by McGhee

    At the Nursery School level, no sex differences were apparent in amounts of laughter, verbal attempts to initiate humor, or hostility of the child's humor but by middle childhood years (6-11), boys were rated higher on all aspects of humor responsiveness studied. Other less conclusive results are reported from the examination of behavioral antecedents.

12. "A Process Model of Humor Judgment," by Leventhal and Cupchik

    Sex differences in response to cartoon and slapstick movies reveal deeper personality characteristics than supposed. This analysis uses an information processing model of humor judgment.

Part III: Recent Publications Continued

Journal of Communication, Spring 1976, Vol. 26, no. 2

A. Government and Media

1. "Structuring the 'Unseen Environment'," by McCombs and Shaw
2. "Print vs. Network News," by McClure and Patterson
3. "Radio vs. TV: The Effect of the Medium," by Cohen
4. "Participation of Escape?" by Barie
5. "What Makes it Change?" by Westley
6. "Whom Do Students Trust?" by Friedman and Friedman
7. "How Media Shape Campaigns," by Carey
8. "A Strategy for Political Broadcasting," by Cater
9. "Speechwriting in the Nixon Administration," by Chapel
10. "Presidential Television," by Rutkus
11. "Television and the Wallace Vote," by Robinson and Zukin
12. "Can Democracy Survive Television?" by Manheim
13. "New Directions and Developments," by Chisman

B. Research on Television and the Young

1. "Setting the Stage for the Conference on Priorities," by Comstock
2. "Priorities and Recommendations," by Anderson, Comstock and Dennis

3. "Sesame Street: Patterns of International Adaptation," by Palmer, Chen, and Lesser
4. "Plaza Sesamo: "Neutral" Language of 'Cultural Assault'?" by Goldsen and Bibliowica
5. "The Development of Attention," by Levin and Anderson
6. "The Japanese Experience," by Yamamoto
7. "Cognitive Skill Learning Across Cultures," by Salomon
8. "Plaza Sesamo in Mexico: An Evaluation," by Diza-Guerrero
9. "The Educational Impact," by Cook and Conner
10. "Evaluating the Evaluators," by Liebert
11. "Living with Television: The Violence Profile," by Gerbner and Gross

Journal of Communication, Winter 1976, Vol. 26, no. 1

A. Explicit Sex -- Liberation or Exploitation?
   1. "The Social Content of Pornography," by Smith
   2. "Male and Female Interest in Sexually-Oriented Magazines," by Stauffer and Frost
   3. "The Rise and Fall of Topless Radio," by Carlin
   4. "Free Meat Talks Back," by Shear
   5. "Danish 'Permissiveness' Revisited," by Bachy
   6. "The Blind Spot of U.S. Foreign Intelligence," by Lewis
   7. "Bringing the California Health Report Up to Date," by Maccoby and Farquhar
   8. "The Cultural Deficit in Broadcasting," by Schwartz
   9. "Effects of Quantification in Scientific Writing," by Witt
   10. "Trends in Network Prime-Time Programming, 1953-74," by Dominick and Pearce
   11. "U.S.-Chinese Dialogue, 1969-72," by Allen
   12. "Television Violence and Its Sponsors," by Slaby, Quarfoth and McConnachie
   13. "Who Writes Children's Books?" by Lukenbill
   14. "TV's Last Frontier: South Africa," by Harrison and Ekman
   15. "Radio Format Strategies," by Hesbacher, et. al.

B. After Thirty Years -- Detente?

1. "An East-West Dialogue on the Peaceful Coexistence of Conflicting Ideologies," by Dusiska, et. al.
2. "Helsinki: The New Equation," by Nordenstreng and Schiller

Part IV: Recent Textbook Publications

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